



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 29, 2023

Rep. David Joyce
Chair
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
House Appropriations Committee
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC

Rep. Henry Cuellar
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
House Appropriations Committee
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC

Dear Chairman Joyce and Ranking Member Cuellar,

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2024 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, we write in support of the President's proposed FY24 budget and the inclusion of \$865 million in discretionary funding to support the mission of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

This funding is critical in supporting our nation's commitment to the American Dream and of a fair and humane immigration system. Specifically, we are supportive of the \$865.2 million allocated for the agency, \$264 million allocated for caseload and backlog reduction, and \$342 million for asylum adjudications.

We were encouraged to see that the President's budget included discretionary funding to address the historic backlog of work authorization, naturalization, green cards, and other applications, as well as improve refugee processing. However, we request that the committee increase this funding from the President's proposal of \$264 million to \$400 million to support application processing and the reduction of backlogs within asylum, field, and service center offices, and an increase from \$342 million to \$425.9 million to fully fund the March 2022 asylum processing rule. Finally, we request that you support \$100 million for the USCIS Citizenship Grant.

USCIS is facing a significant case backlog and processing times that have sharply increased in recent years. This has resulted in individuals falling out of status, families being separated, victims of crime remaining in abusive or exploitative relationships, and businesses losing needed employees. The most recent data confirms that the agency had more than 8,600,000 applications and petitions pending as of September 2022, including over 1,400,000 applications for employment authorization and over 300,000 U visa petitions. Overall processing times grew by approximately 50 percent between FY2017 through FY2021 and continued to grow for many form types during FY2022.

While there is still far more to be done, allocation from Congress in FY2022 has already had an impact. According to the agency's December 2022 progress report, as a result of funding allocated by Congress in FY22, the agency was able to reduce the net backlog of naturalization cases, reduce processing times for a number of form types, and adjudicate nearly double the typically available number of employment-based visas in a given fiscal year. Still, a significant backlog persists. This backlog has created significant processing delays for many application and petition types, such as a 5-year wait for Bona Fide Determinations in pending U visa petitions and a median processing time of nearly three years for I-601A provisional waivers, which is a nearly 667% increase from FY17. Given the size of USCIS's backlog, and its current rate of growth, its expenditure plan for FY2022 indicated that the initial funding of \$250,000,000 provided by Congress for FY2022 would only be sufficient to address approximately 13 percent of the agency's net backlog. In order to ensure the continued efficient reduction in the agency's backlog and the restoration of our system of legal immigration, Congress will have to commit to providing additional funding in FY2024 and beyond.

We ask that the Committee support funding to USCIS in order to help facilitate the agency's work to achieve its electronic filing and processing goals. In 2021, the agency released a five-year project schedule to achieve its goals as required by Congress in Section 4103 of the Emergency Stopgap USCIS Stabilization Act. Supporting the agency's efforts to achieve these goals with an allocation of funding will help to reduce both processing times and the overall backlog of cases, while ensuring a more streamlined process moving forward for USCIS customers and agency staff.

The long-term success of USCIS and our immigration system greatly depends on the support and funding that the agency receives in order to address the current lengthy backlog and processing time that have kept visa applicants, asylum seekers, and other migrants in limbo for months or years. USCIS is mostly funded by immigration fees, and this increased funding would cover staffing costs in addition to general expenses.

We are committed to our Nation's ideals and values of the American Dream, and we respectfully request that the Committee supports the President's budget proposal for USCIS, as well as much needed increases in funding for the agency.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and we look forward to working with you.

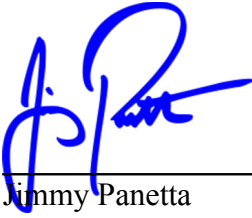
Sincerely,



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



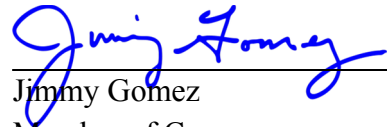
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Member of Congress



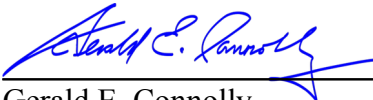
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Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
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Jimmy Gomez
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Gerald E. Connolly
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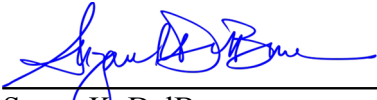
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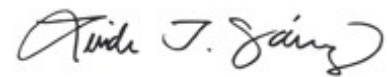
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Steve Cohen
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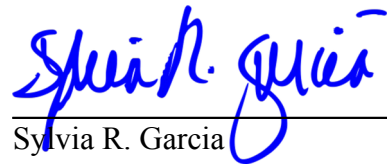
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Sylvia R. García
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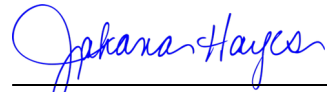
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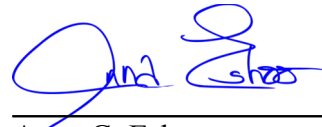
Darren Soto
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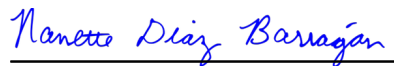
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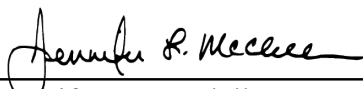
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André Carson

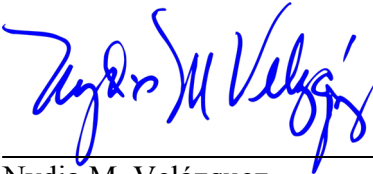
André Carson
Member of Congress



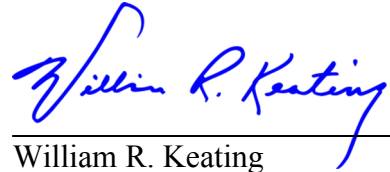
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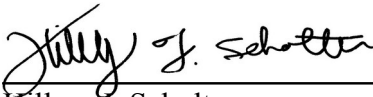
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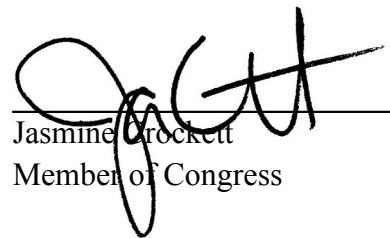
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Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
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Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
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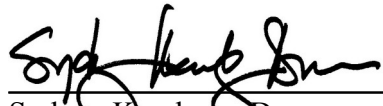
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